

Message Text

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ACTION ORM-02

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FM AMEMBASSY LIMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5622

INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 5736

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: UNHCR, SREF, PE

SUBJECT: REFUGEES IN PERU

REFS: STATE 151670, SANTIAGO 5439

SUMMARY. SUBSEQUENT TO RECEIPT OF STATE REFTELL, AMBASSADOR SPOKE AT LENGTH WITH GILBERT JAEGER, DIRECTOR OF PROTECTION OF THE OFFICE OF THE UNHCR (GENEVA) WHO WAS IN LIMA ON AN ANNUAL INSPECTION VISIT. HE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY UNHCR'S REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE RESIDENT IN LIMA, GILLES SICOTTE. JAEGER AND SICOTTE DESCRIBED UNHCR'S WORK IN PERU AND TOURHCD ON PROBLEMS OF POLITICAL REGUEES IN OTHER SOUTHERN CONE COUNTRIES. A FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW WITH UNHCR'S LIMA PROGRAM DIRECTOR PROVIDED COMPLEMENTARY INFORMATION. END SUMMARY.

1. BY VIRTUE OF 1974 AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOP AND THE UNHCR, PERU ACCEPTED SOME 2,800-3,000 CHILEAN REFUGEES, OF WHICH MORE THAN 2,500 HAVE BEEN PROCESSED TO THIRD COUNTRIES FOR PERMANENT RESETTLEMENT. THOSE THAT REMAIN INPERU, APPROXIMATELY 270 OR AN ACTIVE CASE LOAD OF ABOUT 70 FAMILIES, ARE CONFIDENTIAL

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PRESENTLY ASSITED BY THE COMISION ECUMENICA DE ASISTENCIA SOCIAL (CEDAS), HEADED BY BISHOP RICARDO DURAND FLOREZ OF CALLAO. CEDAS AN OUTGROWTH OF AN EXCLUSIVELY CATHOLIC AGENCY DESIGNED ORIGINALLY TO DEAL WITH EUROPEAN MIGRATION TO PERU, IS NOW COMPOSED OF REPRESENTATIVES OF SEVERAL RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS, AND IS FUNDED ALMOST ENTIRELY BY UNHCR, WITH SOME ADMINISTRATIVE AID FROM DUROPEAN CHURCH GROUPS.

2. SUBSEQUENT TO AUGUST 5, 1975, WHEN THE ORIGINAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOP AND THE UNHCR EXPIRED, SOME 200-300 REGUGEES, ABOUT HALF CHILEAN AND HALF OTHER NATIONALITIES (AGRENTINE, BOLIVIAN, URUGUAYAN) HAVE SOUGHT TEMPORARY REFUGE IN PERU. OF THESE, SOME 70 REMAIN AND ARE ASSITED INFORMALLY BY CEDAS AND UNHCR, EVEN THOUGH THESE ORGANIZATIONS ARE NOT FORMALLY AUTHORIZED TO PROVIDE SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE TO THIS GROUP OR TO ARRANGE RESETTLEMENT FOR THEM UNDER THE 1974 AGREEMENT. UNHCR PROGRAM DIRECTOR TOLD EMBOFF THAT IN ADDITION TO THIS POST-AUGUST 1975 GROUP WITH WHICH IT HAS WORKED, SHE ESTIMATES THAT SOME 1,000 TO 2,000 SOUTHERN CONE REGUEES HAVE TRANSITED PERU ENROUTE TO THIRD COUNTRIES, OR ARE STILL IN PERU ILLEGALLY, BUT HAVE NOT SOUGHT UNHCR ASSISTANCE, EITHER BECAUSE THEY FEAR BEING IDENTIFIED OR BECAUSE THEY YAVE THE FINANCIAL MEANS AND PERSONAL OR FAMILY CONNECTIONS THAT ALLOW THEM TO EITHER MOVE ON TO THIRD CONTRIES OR GO UNDEGROUND IN PERU.

3. CHILEAN REGUEES UNDER THE PROTECTION OF THE 1974 AGREEMENT, AND SUBSEQUENT REFUGEES INFORMALLY ASSISTED BY THE UNHCR ARE PROVIDED LODGING, FOOD, AND AN ALLOWANCE FOR CLOTHING, SCHOOLING AND MEDICINE. THEY ARE RESTRICTED TO THE LIMA METROPOLITAN AREA AND ARE NOT ALLOWED TO WORK, ALTHOUGH MANY DO SO ILLEGALLY. THEY OFTEN LIVE TOGETHER IN PENSIONES, AND HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED TO CONTROL BY PERUVIAN PLAIN-CLOTHES AUTHORITIES AND TO ANONYMOUS LETTERS AND THREATS. BECAUSE OF THE LONG-STANDING ENMITY BETWEEN

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PERUVIANS AND CHILEANS, SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN ARE OFTEN TAUNTED BY THEIR FELLOW-STUDENTS. LIVING UNDER GREAT PSYCHOLOGICAL PRESSURE, MANY HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY NERVOUS DISORDERS AND THE STRAINS IN FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS HAVE HAD A VERY NEGATIVE EFFECT ON THE MORALE OF THE REGUGEES. MANY SUFFER FROM ASTHMA AS A RESULT OF LIMA'S DAMP, OFTEN COLD CLIMATE.

4. THE LEGAL PROTECTION PROVIDED BY UNHCR TO THOSE WHO REMAIN UNDER THE 1974 AGREEMENT CONSISTS PRIMARILY IN PREVENTING PERUVIAN AUTHORITIES FROM ARRESTING OR DEPORTING THEM FOR ILLEGAL ENTRY. AS FAR AS THE POST-AUGUST 1975 GROUP IS CONCERNED, UNHCR HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN INTERVENING WITH PERUVIAN AUTHORITIES TO PREVENT THEM FROM BEING RETURNED TO THEIR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN. MANY REGUEES HAVE BEEN EXPELLED WHEN THE GOP FOUND THAT THEY HAD BEEN WORKING ILLEGALLY, BUT THE UNHCR HAS ARRANGED FROM THEM TO BE SENT TO A THIRD COUNTRY.

5. SINCE 1974 RESTTLEMENT FOR WELL-EDUCATED REFUGEES, THOSE WITH TECHNICAL SKILLS AND THOSE WHOSE POLITICAL BACKGROUND OR PREVIOUS AFFILIATION DO NOT COMPROMISE THEM HAS BEEN RELATIVELY EASY. UNHCR IS PRESENTLY HAVING SOME DIFFICULTY IN LOCATING THIRD COUNTRIES FOR THE HARD-CORE REAMINDER OF THE

FIRST GROUP OF CHILEANS, PRIMARILY BECAUSE THEY ARE PEOPLE OF LITTLE EDUCATION OR SKILLS. THE WORLD ECONOMIC RECESSION HAS MADE IT INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO FIND NEW HOMES FOR THIS GROUP. AND PRESENTLY ONLY CANADA AND SWEDEN ARE ACCEPTING CHILEAN REGUEES, AND THEN ONLY ON A VERY SELECTIVE BASIS. A LIMITED NUMBER OF SOUTHERN CONE REGUEES HAVE SOUTH OR ARE IN THE PROCESS OF SEEKING LEGAL RESIDENCY/ASYLUM IN PERU, BUT IN GENERAL THE GOP IS RELUCTANT TO ACCEPT THEM BECAUSE OF CURRENT ECONOMIC PROBLEMS THAT HAVE GENERATED SERIOUS UNEMPLOYMENT, AND FOR POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS. SOME REGUGUEES WHOSE REQUEST FOR ASYLUM IS EN TRAMITE (BEING PROCESSED) HAVE BEEN ABLE TO AVOID EXPULSION FOR A CONSIDERABLE LENGTH OF TIME, GIVEN THE PLODDING NATURE OF THE PERUVIAN BUREAUCRACY.

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6. UNHCR'S JAEGER TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT HE MET WITH FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS DURING HIS VISIT TO LIMA, TO TRY TO EXTEND THE 1974 ACCORD TO APPLY TO THOSE WHO ARRIVED AFTER AUGUST 1975, IN ORDER TO FORMALIZE THE TEMPORARY PROTECTION BEING AFFORDED TO RECENT REFUGEES, AND TO EXTEND THE TIME LIMIT ON THEIR RESIDENCE IN PERU SO THAT UNHCR CAN FIND THIRD COUNTRIES WILLING TO ACCEPT THEM. HE DESCRIBED THE FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS AS RELUCTANT TO REACH SUCH AN AGREEMENT FOR THE ECONOMIC REASONS ALLUDED TO ABOVE, AND BECAUSE OF THE POSSIBILITY THAT POLITICAL REPRESSION AND ECONOMIC HARD TIMES COULD INCREASE IN CHILE AND ARGENTIA, MAKING PERU ATTRACTIVE TO BOTH POLITICAL REFUGEES AND ECONOMICALLY-MOTIVATED MIGRANTS. JAEGER ALSO MENTIONED THAT THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT IS CONSIDERING REINSTATING THE DERECHO DE LA OPCION, SUSPENDED IN THE FINAL DAYS OF THE ISABEL PERON GOVERNMENT, WHICH WOULD GIVE ARRESTED ARGENTINES THE OPTION OF GOING INTO EXILE OR FACING TRIAL ON A VARIETY OF CHARGES INCLUDING SUBVERSION OF STATE SECURITY AND FRAUD. THIS ALSO COULD RESULT IN AN INCREASED FLOW OF REGUGUEES TO PERU, AN EVENTUALITY THAT THE GOP OBVIOUSLY DOES NOT RELISH.

7. WE BELIEVE THAT THE U.S. CAN BEST SERVE INTERESTS OF SOUTHERN CONE REFUGEES IN PERU BY DEMONSTRATING INCREASED U.S. COMMITMENT TO UNHCR'S WORK. AMBASSADOR ASSURED JAEGER AND SICOTTE THAT PROBLEM OF SOUTHERN CONE REGUEES IN PERU HAS HIGH PRIORITY AMONG U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS, AND THAT HE WILL SUPPORT UNHCR'S DEMARCHE TO GOP REGARDING POST-AUGUST 1975 REFUGEES. PERU HAS BEEN SUPPORTIVE OF U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVES THUS FAR AND MIGHT BE SWAYED BY A LOW-KEY U.S. DEMARCHE IN FAVOR OF EXTENDING TO MORE RECENT SOUTHERN CONE REFUGEES THE PROTECTION ENJOYED BY THE EARLIER GROUP OF CHILEANS. WITH REGARD TO A POSSIBLE LIAISON BETWEEN THE UNHCR AND THE OAS, CONFIDENTIAL

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EMBASSY FEELS THAT, GIVEN PERU'S INTEREST IN MAKING THE OAS MORE EFFECTIVE AND DYNAMIC, A STRENGTHENED, MORE FORMAL, MORE DIRECT WORKING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO ORGNIZATIONS MIGHT BE OF VALUE IN MEETING THE NEEDS OF POLITICAL REGUGEES IN PERU. UNHCR PROGRAM DIRECTOR AGREES IN THE SENSE THAT SUCH A STRENGTHENED LIAISON MIGHT FACILITATE RESETTLEMENT OF REGUEES IN OTHER LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES (COSTA RICA, VENEZUELA, MEXICO AND CUBA HAVE BEEN PRINCIPAL RECEIVE COUNTRIES), GREATLY IMPROVING THE CHANCES OF ADAPTATION TO AND INTEGRATION IN THE HOST SOCIETY. CONTINUED U.S. EFFORTS TO IMPROVE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN CHILE AND AGRENTIAN COULD HAVE, OF COURSE, THE SECONDARY EFFECT OF REDUCING THE FLOW OF REGUGEES TO PERU AND OTHER HEMISPHERE COUNTRIES.

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